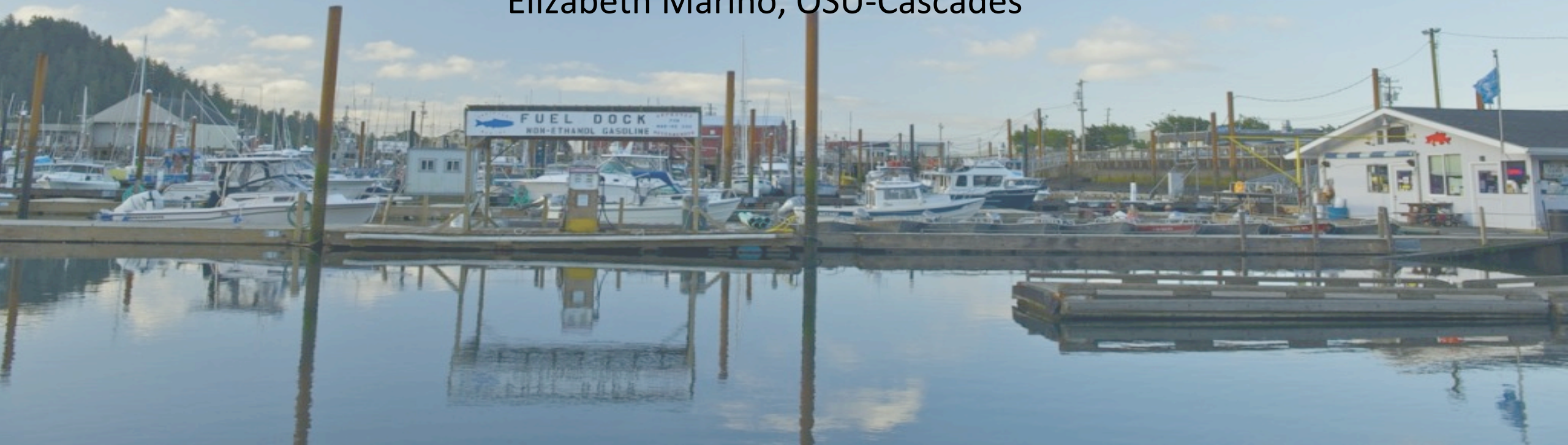




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# Beyond Economic Impact: Understanding socio-cultural resistance to marine reserves

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## **Starting point of research**

- Worldwide declines in ocean health
- Known impacts of overexploitation
- New conservation strategies are needed to respond to the decline in biological diversity

## **However**

- Local populations often do not support marine conservation efforts (especially top-down efforts)
- Marine reserves and “no-take” zones are particularly controversial
- Top-down conservation efforts can be unsuccessful without local buy-in
- Marine reserves have been more politicized than other conservation strategies





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Our research began focusing on the Cape Falcon marine reserve, where there was substantive resistance from the fishing community.

What we found that, despite the collective push against marine reserves, ***fishers did not think there would be substantial economic impact*** from the reserve at Cape Falcon; instead, other concerns came to the foreground as reasons to resist implementation of marine reserves.



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## Concern One: Mistrust of management goals linked to site selection

*“The first question I’d like to have answered on the marine reserves is what is the mission of it .... I think one of the reasons why the fishing community is so kind of up in arms about the whole thing is because all of the time the government people, bureaucrats, were trying to sell it, there was no real clear mandate exactly what they wanted to do.” (quote from interview)*

Point one: If the purpose of the marine reserves was fisheries management, then the reserve was not needed in a place that was not heavily fished.

Point two: The purpose of the reserve was unclear from a legislative perspective; i.e. what was the mandate?





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## Concern two: The Sacredness of Informal Social Spaces

Fishers who overnight in the safety of coves, such near Cape Falcon, fish for dinner; and fishers on their way to offshore fishing grounds stop here occasionally and fish for breakfast. This nearshore area constitutes a traditional rest stop and occasional subsistence fishing ground that has deep roots in the fishing community.



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Concern three: Contesting the idea that “we all own the ocean”

Marine reserves are built and sold on the idea that they are a public good, held in trust and managed by the state. The marine reserves partnership website reads: “Oregon’s coast is a special place for all Oregonians.”





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Concern three: Contesting the idea that “we all own the ocean”

Fishers have established a different, locally relevant criteria for what constitutes being a “stakeholder” or having earned the right to the ocean, as demonstrated in the following quote:

*Fisher 1: “They say the ocean belongs to everybody. I’ve got blood in that ocean.”*

*Interviewer: “Yeah”*

*Fisher 1: “I live there. He lives there. I’m going to claim it.”*



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## Concern four: The Impacts of Uncertainty

In part because of the uncertainty about the mandate of reserves, fishers held deep suspicions that the ultimate goal of the legislature was to designate significantly greater reserved areas—that this was a “first step” towards a much more ambitious plan.

“You’re painting a target on those areas that you decided not to put reserves on at this point; but the [fishing] industry looks at it and says, well, they’re going to make a reserve out of it later.”





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## Discussion

1: Resilient communities are needed in order to face risks; however, "components of resilience are [often] allowed to decline or are deliberately eliminated because their importance is not appreciated until a crisis occurs" (Adger et. al 2005).

Coastal resilience can be undermined by ecological neglect such as overfishing or ocean acidification; but resilience can also be undermined neglect of social systems such as an increasing ***lack of social cohesion***.

## Discussion

2. Conservation narratives are often framed in moral values systems and cultural worldviews that resonate with political liberals and alienate political conservatives (McIntyre et al., 2008).

I think we're seeing this here with the marine reserve systems. The fishers I talked with consider themselves conservationists and all had a deep love and respect for the ocean – but these similarities are not translating across conservation efforts. Increased social cohesion might be possible if goals are aligned and articulated in ways that have broad appeal.





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## Discussion

3. Marine reserves should not just be seen as sentinels of ecosystem research. Implementing social monitoring that helps us understand how marine reserves are discussed, negotiated, and formally and informally responded to by local stakeholders are a) critical to the success of the marine reserves themselves; b) critical to long-term resilience of the community; c) critical to long-term conservation strategies in the future.